

THE MESSENGER

A Pastor's Ponderings

As you may or may not know, the Reformed Church in America (RCA), the denomination with which our church is affiliated, is going through a restructure. Currently, there are four levels of governance known as assemblies outlined in the RCA's Constitution called the *Book of Church Order* (BCO). Each local church is governed by a board made up of elders and deacons elected by the congregation called the consistory. The minister or ministers from each congregation gather with elder representatives from each church in a specific area to form the classis (a Latin term that roughly means a fleet of ships moving in the same direction). This body is responsible for oversight of all the ministers and congregations in its area as well as students studying to be ministers. Classes (plural of classis) in a specific area each send minister and elder delegates to form the regional synod. This body's primary function is to resource and support the classes. Finally, every classis across the US and Canada sends minister and elder delegates to the General Synod. The General Synod can amend the constitution, sets denomination policy and directs the overall direction of the denomination. For more information about the RCA's current structure go to: www.rca.org/about/government/.

Our church is currently a member of the Classis of Schenectady, which is a collection of 17 churches in our immediate area. We are also a member of the Regional Synod of Albany which is made up of 6 classes. This regional synod covers all of upstate New York above Dutchess, Ulster and Sullivan countries. It also includes the only RCA church in Ohio.

The restructure eliminates the classis and the regional synod. The consistory and the General Synod will only be impacted insofar as they interacted with the classis and regional synod. In the place of the classis and the regional synod, a new assembly is being created simply called the

middle assembly (as it is now the only assembly in the middle between the consistory and the General Synod).

By the beginning of October of this year our consistory must declare which middle assembly it will be a part of. Within the bounds of our current regional synod, two middle assemblies are being formed. While the consistory can choose to join a middle assembly anywhere across the US and Canada, it is more likely that our middle assembly of choice will be one of these two middle assemblies forming in our area. One of the assemblies forming in our area is calling itself the Abiding Assembly (AA) while the other is calling itself the North East Middle Assembly (NEMA).

Over the next few months both AA and NEMA will be making presentations about why churches should choose to join with them. Some of these presentations will be in-person while others will be on Zoom. For dates, times and locations of these presentations go to: www.albanysynod.org/restructure.

Here you will also find answers to Frequently Asked Questions, timeline for the restructure and the Identity and Mission Statements for both AA and NEMA.

Admittedly, all of this may seem utterly confusing and overwhelming. However, I promise to do all that I can to support the consistory and the entire congregation during this time of transition. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns. Do not worry, the decision made by this consistory is not forever binding. If once the dust settles, we think we would be better off in a different assembly than the one initially picked, we will be able to switch. All will be well!

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

Rev. Christopher J. McCloskey

Holy Week 2026



Palm Sunday

March 29th

8:00am and 10:00am Services

Maundy Thursday

April 2nd

The Solemn Shadows: Tenebrae Service at 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

April 5th

6:30am, 8:00am and 10:00am Services

Lent Bible Studies

“Renew” Bible Study

Through Lent the group will be reading “Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in the Good News this Lent”, which is a devotional booklet available for free at church. This series is inspired by many of Jesus' core teachings, and invites us to be grounded in the subversive and joyful good news of the gospel. They meet on **Tuesdays at noon via Zoom**. For questions and Zoom link contact Sunny Baldwin, at 518-320-4562 or csunnyb53@gmail.com.

Lenten Bible Study

Diana Ackner is leading a Lent Bible Study on **Tuesdays at 7:00pm at the church** through Lent. This study will coordinate with the devotional. Please contact Diana if you have any questions at education@firstreformedscotia.org.

Lent Devotionals

This year’s Lent devotional entitled “Tell me something good” is now available! You may pick up your copy in the narthex or Brink Hall lobby. Also available, Lent in a Bag - Activities designed for families.



Funeral Planning Workshop

Have you completed your funeral plans AND given them to Pastor Christopher? If the answer is no, perhaps you don't know how to begin or got stuck along the way. We're offering a workshop on Sunday, March 1st at 11:15am, in Room 1. We'll have hymnals, Bible verse ideas and sample services to spark your ideas!

Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 8th. Don't forget to spring forward!



March Communion

Since we just celebrated Communion on February 15th in recognition of Transfiguration of our Lord Sunday, we will celebrate Communion in March on the 15th.

Easter Flowers

Donations and dedication for Easter flowers are being received in the office or in the Sunday offering. After Easter worship, plants are delivered to members who cannot attend Easter Sunday worship. Donations and dedications are due to the church office by March 26th, 2026.

Save the Date: EASTER EGG HUNT!

The annual Easter Egg Hunt will be on **Sunday, March 29th at 11:15am**



If you would like to help out in the egg hunt, bring **12 filled eggs**. Kids will be provided a bag to decorate while the eggs are being hidden. A story and some crafts will be available.

Feel free to contact Miss Diana: education@firstreformedscotia.org

March Faith Formation

March 1st 2nd Sunday in Lent
Love God and love others

March 8th 3rd Sunday in Lent
Work together

March 15th 4th Sunday in Lent
No Class - Communion

March 22nd 5th Sunday in Lent
Do what is right

March 29th Palm Sunday
Follow Jesus

Fowler Spaghetti Dinner & Cake Auction

Fundraiser for Camp Fowler Scholarships

Saturday, March 21st 4:30-6:30pm.

In person or take out. Cake auction starts at 5:00pm.

Adults: \$18 Kids(under 10): \$8

Volunteer sign ups are located in the narthex or contact Miss Diana,
education@firstreformedscotia.org



Spaghetti Dinner

March Mission of the Month



The Mission of the Month for March is Camp Fowler Ministries. Camp Fowler, located near Speculator, NY does not receive direct financial support from Albany Synod. The annual budget for the camp is at least \$150,000, which is raised from churches, organizations, and individuals who share its vision for ministry. One goal of Fowler is to keep the fees affordable for the children who attend. Camp Fowler is an important part of the life of this congregation. We contribute and receive incredible benefits from this partnership.

Backpack Update by Linda Lewis

Sometimes I feel like I'm saying the same thing each month, but then I remind myself that that is because we continue to do the same thing each month, each week, each year. Our dedicated packing volunteers (up to 17!) show up each week, even when the weather is snowy, windy, and bitterly cold! The Regional Food Bank provides a menu for each week, but the volunteers often have to be creative because the amount of food doesn't match the number of bags we need to pack. Luckily, we have a wonderful storage area, that we call "the Blue Room", because the door is painted blue with leftover paint. It occupies half of what used to be the coat room. Please check it out as you walk down to Brink Hall on Sunday and recognize the amazing effort that our volunteers put into this mission. During the school year, thousands of pounds of food items are loaded, unloaded, unpacked, counted and recounted, packed in plastic bags, and delivered to homes and schools (by another set of volunteers!). Extra food is stored on shelves in "the Blue Room" to be used as needed for the families in the Backpack program and for distributions before school vacations. Every week this happens----because our volunteers show up every week. So, yes, it is the same news every month, because we are consistent, and families count on this extra food each week, knowing they can depend on our church and our wonderful volunteers!



Community Meal Update by Mark Holley

The Community Meal guests and volunteers have felt the loss of Cindy Tygert and miss her terribly. Cindy was a pillar of strength and dedication. Our prayers and thoughts are with her family.

We are at a total of 8,188 meals served so far. We had a brunch themed lunch in February. We offered pancakes, french toast, an egg dish, chicken noodle soup, smoothies by Laura, and dessert.

The meal for March is the spaghetti dinner on March 21. We invite the guests to the meal and they are given a free meal. They love watching the cake auction. Please come and support the campers for Fowler at our spaghetti dinner.

Winter Warm-Up Sale

We had a wonderful turnout for our Winter Warm-Up Sale. Many thanks to all the volunteers who worked so tirelessly to make it a success. We realized over \$4,000 in proceeds from this mission project.

YOUTH GROUP

Sunday, March 8th 4pm-6pm

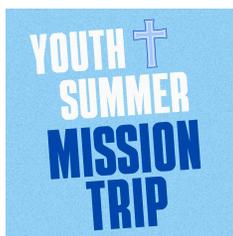
All MS and HS Students Welcome

Delmar Reformed Church

386 Delaware Ave. Delmar, NY



Come enjoy a meal and fellowship with Middle School and High school kids from churches around the area. Meet new friends while playing games and having a good time. A pizza meal will be provided.



MISSION TRIP 2026

Who: ALL High School students

When: Sun. June 28th - Thurs. July 2nd

Where: Reformed Church of Highland Park, New Jersey

What: We will experience their Global Grace Cafe, help set up apartments for those in need, help those affected by deportation issues and more

Interested? Want to know more? Contact Miss Diana

education@firstreformedscotia.org

518-428-2914 (cell)

Men's Group Update

Our first meeting on February 11th was met with a fantastic and enthusiastic show of thirteen men! The discussion was quite fruitful (we also had fruit with the food prepared by the Shaves). Our mission is service, friendship, and fellowship in the name of Christ. The next meeting will be **Tuesday, March 10th at 6:30pm at church**. ALL men are encouraged and welcomed at any of our "get-togethers"!!! If you have questions, contact Bill Shave at wshavejr@gmail.com, or 518-573-1098. If Bill is busy, contact Bob Baldwin at frcsmen@gmail.com, or 518-320-4561.

Genealogy Group

The genealogy group will be meeting again on **March 4th at 7-9pm**. The topics will be (1) Getting Organized; (2) Types of Documents; and, (3) Old and Contemporary Glossaries. AND as always, time for questions relating to your issues. If you have not previously attended, no worries...you are always welcome at any time. This time we will be in Brink Hall so that we can use the big screen for viewing details. Remember to bring your thumb drive to download documents shared during the evening as well as other sessions that you have missed. Note that we meet on the first Wednesday of the month, excluding July and August. So, put April 1st, May 6th, and June 3rd in your calendar. If you have questions, please contact me, Bob Baldwin via email robert.baldwin.acctrng@gmail.com or text 518-320-4561. The more, the merrier!

Women's Self-Defense Class

In honor of Women's History Month, the Health and Wellness Committee has organized a Women's Self Defense Class that will take place on **Saturday March 28th from 1:00pm-4:00pm in Brink Hall**. This class caters to anyone who identifies as a female and is 13 years of age or older. Fathers, spouses and supportive males are also welcome to sign up, but please note that this class will focus on female safety and empowerment. Instruction will be led by Lisa Boucher, a 6th degree black belt, who will teach a mix of hands-on work with bags, lead practice with partners and discuss personal safety/environmental awareness. Her techniques are rooted in Taekwondo adapted for real world scenarios and building confidence in daily life. The class will be tailored to participant needs and abilities to ensure everyone feels safe and leaves the class with greater peace of mind. To reserve a seat, please sign up in the Church Office with your \$35 payment (cash or checks made out to First Reformed Church of Scotia) due at time of sign up. Please contact Susan Damon at susandamon1@gmail.com for any additional questions.



Health and Wellness Note

This month three of the Awareness Month Themes focus on nutrition, sleep and cancer awareness. These National Awareness months include: Nutrition Month, Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and Sleep Awareness Month. Here's info on each:

- National Nutrition Month focuses on making informed food choices, reducing saturated fat and sugar, and developing healthy eating habits.
- National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month focuses on the need for early detection, screenings, and understanding what risk factors you have.
- National Sleep Awareness Month stresses the importance of sleep quality for your overall health, which includes memory and disease prevention.

So here are some actions you can take to age healthily no matter what your age is now:

- **Nutrition:** Increase your fiber intake and focus on eating a balanced diet that includes fruit/vegetables, protein, and whole grains.
- **Screenings:** Schedule colorectal screenings as your provider advises, no delaying for a few years or skipping it all together! Remember the current age to begin is 45 years old.

Following healthy lifestyle habits, like consuming alcohol in moderation, eating more fruit/vegetables, and exercising regularly also decreases the risk of getting colorectal cancer.

- **Wellness:** Establish a regular sleep schedule to boost your health and immune system. Also, what you eat can affect your sleep. Studies show that eating less fiber, more saturated fat, and more sugar for even just one day, can cause a lighter, less restorative sleep.

Start with just one of these changes and you can be on your way to a healthier you!

Over the Bridge

Over The Bridge is accepting donations of gently used men's and women's winter jackets/coats, sweatpants and sweatshirts, socks, gloves and hats. Also blankets, sleeping bags and hand warmers. Thank you so much to everyone who has donated already to keep this mission going over the winter this far. It means the world to the recipients.

March Anniversaries

Jack and Carol Arnold	20
Jay and Judy Harlow	27
Dennis and Sheryl Pelkey	30

March Birthdays

Ellie Zenner	5	John Hoffman	12	Jacob Hoefler	25
Sheila Dort	8	Ryan Makrin	13	Jeff Taft	26
Bob King	9	Anneliese Conley	16	Deborah Rahn	26
Dave Murray	9	Jae Schalekamp	16	Sharon Locke	28
Ken Willcox III	9	Wayne Penn	17	Peg Kniskern	28
Georgia Grant	11	Nancy Passer	24	Kristen Shave	30

Address Service Requested

**First Reformed Church of Scotia
224 N. Ballston Avenue
Scotia, NY 12302
(518) 370-4751**